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## SERMON CCCLXVII.

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### WISDOM AND FOLLY.

"A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."—Proverbs, x. 1.

WISDOM and folly, like sweet and bitter, sickness and health, light and darkness, are irreconcilable opposites. Wisdom comprehends whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report. A wise son is a young man of correct habits and sound moral and religious principles. He is temperate, chaste, frugal and industrious. He loves and reverences his parents, submits himself cheerfully to their authority, treasures up their counsels, consults their wishes, and strives in every way to promote their happiness. His talents may, or may not be of the first order. But he must be amiable, dutiful, affectionate and unblameable, or he is not a wise son. No intellectual brilliancy or affluence can make him so, without the filial virtues. Those children, and those only, make glad parents, who are obedient, sober, conscientious and diligent in study or in business—who as they grow in stature and years, grow also in wisdom and in favor with God and man, and give fair promise of future usefulness.

*Let us inquire then why and how it is that a wise son maketh a glad father.*

1. The father of a wise son feels richly rewarded for all the care and expense of bringing him up. It may have cost him years of toil and self-denial. He may have been obliged to "rise early and sit up late," and eat the bread of carefulness to earn the price of his son's education. Or, however easy may have been his circumstances, he cannot but have felt great solicitude when he saw the dear boy shooting up rapidly into manhood, and thought of the thousand temptations to which he would soon be exposed, and the wayward propensities of the youthful heart, which give all these temptations such terrible facilities to beguile and destroy. Many an anxious hour he must have passed when his child first went from home; perhaps many a sleepless night, when he went to the boarding school or entered the public seminary. What mighty issues were then at stake! "O what if my beloved Joseph, now so obedient, so affectionate, so promising, so happy, should be snared and taken by those who lie in wait to destroy? What if his principles should

be debauched and his heart hardened? What if he should become idle and dissipated in his habits, ruin his character and sacrifice his health and lose his soul? How could I survive it?"

Thus has many an anxious father soliloquised, when the great question was considered whether his darling son would "walk with wise men," or with fools, would "enter into the path of the wicked," or walk in the way of the just. And what a relief it is, when a parent finds that his prayers are answered, that his child is safe—that he has chosen virtuous companions—that his good principles and habits are gaining strength—that his letters are full of affection and duty—that his character is delightfully unfolding in the broad sunshine—that he is gaining the confidence of the wise and good—and, in one word, that, having passed through the ordeal, he has come forth as gold.

Now the happy parent forgets all his toils, all his struggles with adverse fortune, and all his anxieties. He feels himself repaid a hundred fold for all that he has done and all that he has felt. The dear image of his child is every day before him, and beams perpetual gladness upon his heart.

2. The father of a wise and virtuous son is happy in the reflection, that should he be taken away suddenly from his family, his place would be in some good measure filled by one so dear to him and to them.

There is no one to whom he can look with so much confidence and satisfaction to be his representative in the dear bereaved circle; for no one but a child can be bound to it by so many endearing ties. And when the anticipated hour of separation comes, with what joy can the dying father say, Behold thy mother—behold thy brother and thy sister!

3. The father of a wise son rejoices in the hope that should he live to need a prop, he shall have a vigorous and willing arm to lean upon, as he goes down into the vale of years. What must be the feelings of a parent, as old age creeps on, and "the grogshop is a curse, and then strong men bow themselves," what must be his emotions when he thinks of a son, once the joy of his heart, but now in the reprobate's grave; or a miserable prodigal, living not to solace him in his declining years, but to "bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave!" And so on the other hand, how happy must that father be, who can look to a dutiful and pious child, with a full assurance, that should the time of need ever come, there will be one at least to support his tottering steps and smoothe his passage to the tomb!

4. The father of a wise and virtuous son is exceedingly happy in the prospect of leaving such a representative behind him, to bear up his name and sustain the reputation of his family. This at least is *natural*, and who will say that it is *wrong*? Can it be doubted, that the thought of leaving such a son as Isaac was, gladdened Abraham's heart, when he gave up the ghost and died in "a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people," or that Jacob had a similar feeling, when "he blessed the sons of Joseph, leaning upon the top of his staff?" What a tide of utter desolation must roll over the heart of a dying father, as he looks upon a profligate son, on whom he had once

doated, and realizes that when he is gone the prodigal will be a disgrace to the name he bears and a curse to his family! And so on the other hand, as I have already intimated, how must the heart of any pious father be cheered, who can leave the world with the well grounded hope, that the son of his love will more than fill his place in the church and in the community; and will bear up the honor of his house long after his own departure! If children's children are "a crown of glory" to the patriarch while he lives, how can he help blessing God when he is permitted to indulge the fond hope, that he shall live in a pious and virtuous posterity, long after his body has moulded back to dust?

5. A wise and affectionate son exceedingly gladdens the heart of a pious father, by the promise which his talents and virtues give, that he will become a useful member of society. It is the happiness of some parents, not only to see their children rising to posts of honor and influence, and doing much good in their own life-time, but to leave them still advancing in their bright career. When this is the case he must be more or less than a father, who does not feel the gushings of joy from his own full heart. How delightful must it be, when a young man is advancing successively through the various stages of education, for his father to hear nothing but commendations from his teachers, and to see nothing but what he certainly approves himself! How gratifying to know, that his son is accumulating an ample capital of wisdom and knowledge, to be expended in promoting the temporal and eternal well being of mankind! With what joy does such a father anticipate the time, when his son may put the impress of his wisdom upon the legislation of his country, or interpret her laws from the bench of justice, or guide the youthful mind in her seminaries of learning, or when he may become an able and successful minister of the Gospel at home, or preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ" in a foreign land!

Who can bear to look at the reverse of this bright vision—to think of a father who has done everything to prepare his son for an honorable and useful life, mourning over the wreck of his hopes, and going out of the world with the heart-breaking reflection that the child on whom so much property and so many affections and so many tears have been lavished, is to live after him, if he lives at all, a burning curse to the community, which he was born to adorn and to bless?

6. Every pious parent, in the anxiety which he feels for his child, looks beyond this fleeting and transitory world, and is infinitely more solicitous about his eternal well-being, than about any or all of his temporal interests. To see a beloved child taking the broad way to destruction, the victim of habitual or occasional intemperance; stopping his ears and hardening his heart against the tenderest expostulations—to read the evidence of his midnight revels in his pallid cheek and swollen eyes, and to witness his downward career as he rushes madly on "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath," is overwhelming. To see a son of high promise, wallowing in the kennel and ruining all his fair prospects for this world, were there nothing beyond, would be agony almost insupportable to a pious and doating parent. But O the soul

that never dies ! O the blackness of darkness for ever ! O the worm that never dies ! How can a tender father endure the thought, that his child should be ruined for eternity ?

Nothing, on the other hand, gives pious parents so much joy, as the developments of virtue and piety in the children of their hopes and their prayers. If such a child is taken away from them in early life, their hearts are comforted with the thought that he is in heaven—that great as the loss is to them, it is gain to him ; and that he is gone before them to await their coming, in the world of glory ; or if the Christian parent is first called home, as will ordinarily be the case, when he leans his dying head upon the bosom of his child, O how does his heart rejoice in the hope that in a few years at most they shall meet and be for ever with the Lord ! Thus in whatever light we view the subject, we see that a wise son maketh a glad father ; we see *why* it is that Christian parents rejoice so exceedingly, in the virtues and piety of their children.

But in our text there is a dark as well as a bright side to the picture. If, as we have seen, a wise son maketh a glad father, it is equally true, that a *foolish son is the heaviness of his mother*.

As folly is everywhere in the book of Proverbs synonymous with wickedness, a foolish son is a young man, who turns a deaf ear to parental counsels, and breaks away from parental restraints—who chooses the idle and the vicious for his associates—yields himself up to the rule of depraved passions and appetites—casts off the fear of God, and cares not whose heart is broken by his waywardness ; but is determined to have his own way, and even acts more undutifully than he otherwise would, just to show his independence, and to let the world see that he knows how to take care of himself. In a word, a foolish son is one, in the more desperate cases of prodigality, “ whose eye mocketh at his father, and scorneth to obey his mother.” In the emphatical language of our text, he is “ THE HEAVINESS OF HIS MOTHER.” He is a heavy burden upon her heart, which she cannot throw off, and which no one can bear a part of, so as to lighten it. There it is, day and night, evening and morning, pressing her down to the dust. It is not *one* of her great trials, but *the* great trial of her life. A living, corroding, wasting affliction. She could bear sickness, could bear poverty, bear hunger, bear to be turned out by a remorseless creditor into the street,—bear anything—but O, to have her darling son become a prodigal and a reprobate—how can she endure the thought ; and yet she can no more drive it from her agonized bosom, than she can annihilate every vestige of consciousness that pertains to her being. O that foolish, that undutiful, that dissipated son, he is the *heaviness of his mother*—yes, of his *mother*, of the friend who has done and suffered more for him than any other friend in the world. It is *heaviness* itself :—not as if some one burden too grievous to be borne were laid upon her, but it is like accumulated and ever accumulating weight of all that is most crushing. Mark the phraseology : *the* heaviness. It is made to stand out, as if no other trial of her life was worthy of being mentioned or thought of. And is there any other like it ; any afflic-

tion which so pierces the maternal heart, and leaves it bleeding and festering and aching till the last throb in death? The desertion of a hundred summer-day friends she could sustain—the scorn of a thousand she could bear—under a falling mountain she could sink down and die in peace, and go to her everlasting rest. Here is the burden which her gentle, stricken spirit, cannot bear; but which, unless the prodigal repents, she must carry, heavier and heavier though it be to her dying day.

What were her emotions, when she caught the first smile of her darling boy and clasped him to her bosom? What bright visions of hope flitted across her fond heart, as every day some new beam of intelligence shot forth from his opening mind! When he was perfectly helpless, with what matchless patience and tenderness did she watch over him! When he was sick, with what gentleness did she cradle him in her arms—with what cheerfulness did she deprive herself of rest during many a long and anxious night! When she thought he would die, how would her heart sink within her, and how fervently did she pray that he might be spared! When he recovered, O how did she rejoice over him! He was born, she fondly hoped, for some high purpose, and would be spared to make her heart glad all the days of her life. He was her jewel, perhaps her only jewel; and O how precious in her eyes! When, as years rolled on, and he became the brightest boy in the school and every eye was turned upon him, what a thrill of joy did it carry to her inmost soul; and when he left her for the higher seminary, all ruddy and artless and dutiful, how did her eager hopes run before him, and climb up the steep which in her fond imagination he was to ascend! She rejoiced, it may be with trembling, but still she rejoiced.

Her recollection of what had befallen other youths equally promising told her, that he was in peril and might fall, but her heart said, No:—it must not, it cannot be. I am sure he loves me. He will not forget my counsels. If temptations assail him, he will remember his mother and put them behind. He will distinguish himself as a scholar. He will gain the confidence of his guardians and teachers. In his usefulness and rising fortunes I shall rejoice. In sickness I shall be comforted by his tender solicitude. In old age I shall lean upon his manly arm. When I die and leave him, he will be a sincere mourner. I shall live in his memory. He will serve God and his generation faithfully. The wicked will shrink away from the sunshine of his example. He will live honorably—he will die happy. Many will rise up and call him blessed, and I shall meet him in Heaven.

But no:—doating mother! This is all a dream. Alas, she wakes up and finds it so, when in one short year, perhaps, the character of her child has undergone a most disastrous change. He is now a foolish, wicked son; she sees it; is obliged to believe it; *realizes* it. O such a heaviness, she never felt before. She cannot describe it, but there it is, pressing upon her heart, and almost to suffocation, and all the sympathy in the world cannot take off the load. She tries to bear up un-

der it; but her heart-strings break—and her own reprobate child, her murderer, wonders what secret and strange disease has destroyed his mother.

CONCLUSION.—But it is time to draw to a close, and the following are some of the reflections which the subject suggests.

1. What abundant cause have the parents of virtuous and pious children, to lift up their hearts in continual thanksgiving to God! O how rich, how precious the gift! What is wealth, what is honor, what is the highest worldly prosperity, compared with that perennial stream of gladness, which flows into their hearts when they see their sons and daughters “walking in the truth;” “searching for wisdom as for silver, and digging for it as for hid treasure.” You may take away everything from such parents—their goods, their lands, their homes—but so long as their children are virtuous and dutiful and of “good report,” they are rich; and if pious themselves, will bless God every day, as long as they live, for giving and sparing to them such an offspring. The man who would exchange this treasure for a throne “is a fool.”

2. If a wise son is so great a blessing to his father, and if a foolish son is such an insupportable heaviness to his mother, then how aggravated is the guilt, how refined the cruelty of seducing him from the path of virtue? What punishment would not that wretch deserve, who should insinuate himself into the confidence of a happy family, and then, at midnight, steal away the sleeping babe from its mother’s bosom and dash it out of the window upon the pavement? But the bereavement would not be half so afflictive as the seduction, which charms the sense and undermines the principles and debauches the heart of a confiding, inexperienced youth, when placed beyond the reach of parental warning and protection. The wily seducer of a sober and piously educated youth, may bear the shape and name of a man, but his relationship is with devils. He may “be transformed into an angel of light,” the more surely to accomplish his purpose, but he has the fang of a serpent and the heart of a demon.

3. If a wise and virtuous son is so great a blessing to his parents and family, then too much pains cannot be taken, to imbue the minds of the rising generation everywhere, with that divine love, which is “the fulfilling of the law.” Those who fear God, will best discharge all the relative duties of life. Who then can estimate the good that is done, when a promising young man is saved by the vigilance of a companion from falling into the snares which are so artfully set for him by the wicked, or who is rescued from their entanglements and brought back to his father’s house? The joy is more than that house can hold. “His feet had well nigh slipped,” or he had actually begun to reel along the broad way in company with those who had seduced him from the paths of virtue and peace. But kind and strong hands have delivered him. There is now a bright career of usefulness before him, and who can tell what multitudes may yet rise up and call him blessed?

What more shall I say? Would that I could make every one of the

millions of young men in America hear—especially all the sons of pious parents! To make a kind and affectionate father glad, all the days of his life, by walking in the paths of wisdom and peace, and to pour a tide of perennial joy into the bosom of a doating mother, O what motives to a virtuous and useful life! On the contrary, to dry up the sources of all this gladness and joy, and to pour gall and wormwood through every domestic channel, who can help me to a name for such black ingratitude, such extreme folly and wickedness!



## SERMON CCCLXVIII.

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### THE GUILT OF CONTINUED IMPENITENCE.

"Wo unto thee, Chorazin! wo unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.—Matthew, xi. 21.

THE reason for the wo denounced in the text is given in the preceding verse; "then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not." The cities referred to were those which lay on the borders of the sea of Tiberias, three of which are named in connection with his denunciations, viz., Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. In these cities a large part of the early ministry of our Lord was spent, and most of his mighty works were done. The Evangelist Matthew is particular in giving an account of the circumstances under which he entered upon his public labors.

"Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." As soon as John had retired who was his forerunner, his ministry began. He preached in the same places, that he might follow up the impressions that had been made, and that he might avail himself of the attention which had been awakened. "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria." As John wrought no miracle, less interest was felt in his ministry; the signs and wonders which Jesus performed led great multitudes from the adjacent regions to resort to him and he preached the Gospel unto them. These multitudes heard his sermon on the Mount.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples to make inquiry in relation to his claims to the Messiahship. In his answer he referred to the miracles he had wrought, as the seal of Heaven to his credentials. After the disciples of John had departed he explained to the great assembly, the nature and design of his mission. He gave him a high character, and to him was committed a peculiar dispensation. He took rank above the ancient prophets. Still he was below the least disciple under the Gospel. The transition from the light and splendor of the reign of Christ to the guilt



of those who rejected it was natural. Many had refused to hear both John and his great Successor. "Then began he to upbraid," to reprove and condemn, "the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done because they repented not." He had not denounced them before. He began his sermon on the Mount by using the language of blessing and encouragement. After faithfully exhibiting the truth and unfolding the way of salvation, when he found that many continued impenitent, shut their eyes upon the light and refused to receive his messages of grace, he exposed their guilt and pronounced upon them, though in tones of compassion, the wrath of God. "Wo unto thee, Chorazin! Wo unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." I know not how their obstinacy and aggravated sin could have been more forcibly expressed.

No reference is had in these tremendous woes to breaches of the moral law, to immoralities, to overt acts of transgression, to violations of the Sabbath, to fraud or violence. The sin laid to their charge was impenitence. They repented not at the preaching of Christ. To make the matter real, let us accompany the Son of God in his tour of benevolence through the cities of Galilee. Taking his sermon on the Mount as a specimen of his preaching, we may see him seated on some declivity, expounding the law of God; exposing the numerous errors incorporated in the traditions of the Elders; teaching its spirituality and extent; showing that it reaches to the motives and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. He gives the true meaning and scope. He uses right words, he aims at no rhetorical effect. His Heavenly countenance cannot fail to attract notice and win the heart. His calm dignity and deep seriousness give weight to his instructions, while his simplicity and affection would seem to disarm prejudice. He is intent upon his great errand; he goes from village to village, receiving all who come to him. He appeals to every motive. He shows himself a friend to their temporal interests. He sympathizes in all their afflictions, he heals the sick, relieves the distressed, restores the lunatic and raises the dead. He visits the poor and offers them salvation. He preaches to all. He exhibits the character of God in all its loveliness and glory; he unfolds his purposes of mercy, explains the way of life, and by teaching the relations we sustain, points out the duties binding upon us. His life is an exemplification of his doctrines. He is holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. He goes about doing good. A nobleman comes to him in behalf of his son who is dangerously ill—he heals him by a word without even going to his house. A poor widow has an only son, her stay and support, he dies and is carried out of the city for burial; he has compassion on her and raises him to life. These mighty acts give a tone of authority to his words, a degree of interest to his ministry, which no other messenger from God possessed. Never man spake like this man. Multitudes crowd to hear him preach. Adopting the most familiar manner, he invites all to approach him, and if they are in doubt on any point, if any obscurity rests on any subject, he encourages the

fullest inquiry; his dignity is not injured if they arrest his discourse by questions. How can they enjoy greater advantages or be more highly favored? They are exalted to heaven in point of privilege. What is the result of this system of means? What is the effect of these sermons and sabbaths and miracles and labors? With what success is *such* a ministry crowned? Will not *all* obey his precepts and become his disciples? Alas! in the language of the prophet which had reference to his preaching, he is left to exclaim with sorrow on their account, "who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" They repented not. The formalists among them still relied upon their duties, trusted in their own works, and rejected the righteousness of Christ. Merchants and men of business returned to their various pursuits, intent upon gain, deferring serious attention to spiritual matters to a more convenient season. Eternal things did not take deep hold of the heart. Present care and worldly occupations were the substance, the concerns of the soul the shadow. Nothing the great Preacher could say produced alarm, or aroused the conscience. They cared for none of these things. Here and there one of the lower classes turned to the Lord. Often was his benevolent heart affected as he looked around upon the multitudes who in their blindness and unbelief despised their own mercies. He was the only Saviour, he preached the only way of salvation, there was no other name given among men in which they could approach God and live. He knew they must perish if they continued to reject his grace. Again and again therefore did he press them to repent and believe the Gospel. He mingled his tears with his entreaties. The miracles he wrought to remove their doubts and establish his claims were acts of mercy performed towards their friends, but still they would none of his counsels and despised his reproofs. What a contrast would have been presented, if he had gone into the populous cities of Tyre and Sidon! Though the inhabitants were idolators, though ignorant of the true God and given up to luxury and licentiousness, sins which prevail in marts of trade and cities of commerce, still, awed by his miracles, won by his kindness, enlightened by his instructions, they would have humbled themselves in the dust for their sins and turned from their idols to the loving God. It would require but little stretch of the imagination to follow him into the crowded streets and market-places—while thousands gathered around him to witness his mighty works; the whole city would be moved by the appearance and power of the heavenly stranger; the infirm and the aged, the halt and the blind would apply to him for healing—filled with gratitude they would speak in his praise and spread his fame on the wings of the wind. Kings and nobles, rich and poor, young men and maidens would flock to hear his gracious words; public proclamation would be made that all should repent and become his followers. Said Jesus, "if the mighty works which were done in the cities of Galilee had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." The voice of lamentation would have been heard in their streets. Our Saviour, from the language he used, evidently had reference to the repentance of Nineveh

under the preaching of Jonah. On another occasion he referred to the preaching and success of the prophet, with a view to show his hearers the hardness of their hearts and the aggravated punishment they would receive for rejecting his truth. "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." We might infer, from the astonishing movement of the city when the prophet entered in and delivered his awful message, what would have been the effect of the miracles and preaching of the Son of God. "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. "Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey." Great cities are filled with wickedness, and therefore there is less hope of them. "And Jonah," alone and unfriended, "began to enter into the city a day's journey; and he cried and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robes from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh (by the decree of the king and his nobles), saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

Who will say that a more powerful influence attended the preaching of Jonah in Nineveh than would have accompanied the mighty works of Christ in Tyre and Sidon? The novelty of the scene, the splendor of the miracles, the authority of the teaching, the character of the preacher, would have aroused and humbled the cities of Phœnicia.

Some have attempted to obscure the meaning and weaken the force of the text by starting difficulties, as, what sort of repentance did our Saviour mean when he said the cities of Tyre and Sidon would have repented? Did he mean external reformation, or inward, sincere and true repentance, and how did the power here ascribed to miracles, agree with what was said in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that if they hear not Moses and the prophets neither would they believe though one rose from the dead? Are miracles sufficient to produce repentance without the special influences of God's spirit? It is a sufficient answer to these and similar speculative questions, that our Saviour used popular language; he intended, in upbraiding these cities for their unbelief, to set their sins in a strong light. They were a stiff-necked people, en-

trenched in self-righteousness. He therefore compared their conduct with that of the greatest sinners then living, the wicked inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom. He meant to say that they had steeled their hearts to a greater degree of hardness, and placed themselves farther from the kingdom of heaven, than the heathen who dwelt in those cities.

I. Let us look at the case of those impenitent hearers denounced in the text. The charge is, they *repented not*. The means employed to bring them to repentance were the preaching and miracles of Christ.

It will not be denied that impenitence is a sin; they who have done wrong ought to be sorry for it; they who have broken the law of God ought to confess and forsake their sin. But in this case the sin was aggravated by the privileges enjoyed. The Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah, but they remained unaffected at the mighty works of a greater than Jonah. They were Jews; to them pertained the giving of the law and the covenants; they had enjoyed a standing revelation; the will of God had been revealed to them; they had been blessed with the ministry of the prophets; they were born and nurtured in the bosom of the Church; they had line upon line, precept upon precept—so clear was the evidence of the divine origin of their religion, so full were their privileges, that it was inquired *what more could have been done for them?* The preaching of Christ was level to their understandings—he sought out acceptable words—he was deeply in earnest, he persevered after they refused to hear. His instructions were not only the best adapted to enlighten, convince and save his hearers, but his mighty works were well suited to give interest and weight to his messages of truth. There could be no more proper way of confirming his testimony, whether we consider the persons he addressed or the doctrines he taught. The Jews were incapable of conviction by another way than by miracle; no other reason would have been apprehended by them, or would have any force upon them. “The Jews,” says Paul, “require a sign;” and said our Saviour to them, “except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” And what more proper to establish the great doctrines of the Gospel than the miracles of merey wrought by the Son of God? To take away all excuse, to overcome their inveterate prejudices, he acted, in all his intercourse with them, with the highest wisdom, his works were done in open day, they were oft-repeated, they were numerous, and bore the stamp of benevolence. Jesus appealed to his good works; after the exercise of ingenuity in trying to evade the evidence, they were constrained to acknowledge the mighty power of God. I see not how more could have been said or done to produce conviction without destroying their free agency. They were left wholly without excuse. “If I had not done among them the works which none other man had done, they had not had sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.” A miracle is an interposition of divine power either in suspending or counteracting the laws of nature. It is the highest evidence in favor of a commission from God. It is wrought to establish some great truth. Though strongly tempted and fully disposed, they could not deny that notable miracles had been performed by

Jesus Christ. They showed their opposition by ascribing them to Beelzebub. The mission of Moses had been confirmed by miracles; the divine authority of that mission they acknowledged; on what reasonable ground could they reject the claims of Christ, who furnished evidence of the same kind, and much more full and conclusive? The ruler of the Jews evinced his candor and good sense when he said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." The same sentiment was expressed with great vigor by the man whose eyes Christ had opened. While the Pharisees were disposed to set aside the evidence of such a mighty act, he said, "since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." The Apostle Peter, in attempting to fasten conviction upon the consciences of his hearers, who had rejected and crucified the Son of Man, appealed to his miracles as the strongest evidence of his Messiahship. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did, by him, in the midst of you as ye yourselves also know, Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." The same argument was used with effect in his sermon at Cesarea. "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (he is Lord of all;) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." And yet this word, proclaiming peace and published by Him who was thus anointed with power, the hearers of Jesus rejected. Such was the aggravation of their sin! The wisdom of his words, the greatness, publicity and number of his miracles failed to lead them to repentance.

What were the elements of those feelings which led to such treatment of the Son of God? The history of his ministry will enable us to answer this question.

1. *Self-righteousness* was one cause of their impenitence. When Christ came in the flesh, he found the Jewish people astonishingly ignorant of the law. Its spirituality was covered up under a mass of traditions. Even the teachers seemed not to understand its scope. The circle of religion was so circumscribed that a few vain ceremonies and heartless duties constituted the whole. The confidence of the Scribes and Pharisees in their good estate was in proportion to their destitution of the spirit of grace. A tradition prevailed to this amount, "that if but two men ever enter heaven, one will be a Scribe and the other a Pharisee." Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. He taught the spirituality, extent and sanctions of the law; he uncovered the obligations resting upon all men to love God with all their heart and their neighbors as themselves; he exposed the radical defects of mere mo-

rality as a ground of hope ; he poured the light of truth upon the dark recesses of the heart, and showed that the whole system of its affections, its imaginations and desires, was only evil continually. He pointed out as clearly the true ground of acceptance, as he did the deficiency of their righteousness. But they trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Their ears were closed and their hearts barred against his messages. They compared themselves with themselves, they were ignorant of the true standard of holiness. They would not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd. Their unconcern was voluntary, and so long as they felt not their need of Christ, his preaching was vain, his mighty works only irritated but did not convince.

2. *Pride* was also another source of their impenitence. They boasted of their descent from Abraham ; they were vain of their privileges ; they looked down upon other nations less highly favored ; they called them "dogs." The appearance of Christ, his instructions, were designed to promote humility. The great principle of his Gospel was that no flesh should glory in God's sight. Such a feeling of vain confidence, such a disposition to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, stood directly in the way of his instructions. "How can ye believe," said he, "who receive honor one of another?"

Many were kept in impenitence by *the example of others*. Men of age, wealth and standing, occupying stations of honor and importance, are not aware of the influence they exert, and of the solemn account they must render. The young are swayed by those above them in years ; a large portion of every community take their opinions from others. When the claims of Christ were canvassed, and many were disposed to become his followers, the artful enemies of truth met them with the inquiry, "have any of the rulers believed on him?" Surely they must know more than you ; but to a thinking mind it were easy to see why they, in their pride, rejected him. They looked upon him as setting up adverse claims.

Others again were so filled with *prejudice*, they could see no excellency in the character, no justice in the claims of Christ. They were displeased with his poverty and humble origin. They looked for a Messiah who should come in splendor, who should affect great political influence and set them free from Roman bondage ; but when he appeared in the lowly guise of a carpenter's son, when he retired from the noise and bustle of the world, there was nothing in him to awaken interest. He was despised and rejected of men ; they hid, as it were, their faces from him.

In analyzing the feelings and pronouncing upon the motives of those who rejected the ministry of Christ, we have been guided by facts recorded and opinions expressed in the New Testament.

II. We proceed to remark upon *the nature and justice of the sentence* denounced against them. It was in the form of a woe. Those cities, at the time Christ uttered the sentence, were populous and flourishing. Although they heeded not his words, and treated with scorn his denuncia-



tions, the wo cleaved to them like the leprosy, nor could they escape from it. They immediately began to decline in wealth and numbers, and soon dwindled into insignificant villages, nor can even their location now be determined. But while a series of temporal evils was connected with their rejection of Christ and his woes pronounced upon them, the sentence had special reference to the next world. This is evident from the next verse. "But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of Judgment than for you." The comparative sins of Chorazin and Bethsaida, and Tyre and Sidon, would then be weighed and ascertained, and a sentence according to truth and equity then be pronounced. Judging from the time and circumstances when the punishment will be fully inflicted, we may conclude that it is not confined to this world, but reaches, and mainly has respect to the next. The wo in the text means the wrath of God in the form of tribulation and anguish upon the soul for ever and ever. This will include separation from heaven, eternal abandonment to remorse of conscience, rage of passion, reproach of devils, and the fire of justice. The place of punishment will be the blackness of darkness; the ministers of vengeance the devil and his angels; the duration, eternal ages. The justice of the sentence is proved by the light and privileges which mark the heinousness of the sin. "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." Had Christ wrought no miracles, had he merely issued his commands without living among them and exhibiting the loveliness of virtue, their sin had not been so great; but he delivered his messages in person, he spake as one having authority, he had a witness in every man's conscience; he illustrated his own precepts, proved the divinity of his mission by signs and wonders, wrought in the midst of them, under circumstances which admitted of no doubt; and therefore they were without excuse; every mouth will be stopped when the sentence is pronounced, and when it is executed the holy universe will exclaim, "just and true are thy ways, Lord, God Almighty." The men of Nineveh will rise up and condemn them because they repented upon the terror of lighter threatenings and upon the encouragement of weaker hopes. The inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon will meet a milder doom because they never heard Messiah's voice, nor witnessed his mighty works.

It is proper to make a more particular improvement of this subject by applying the principles involved in this case to ourselves.

1. The guilt of impenitence is great in proportion to light and knowledge. Our Saviour instituted a comparison between the cities of Galilee where he had preached and wrought miracles, and Tyre and Sidon who were left in darkness. The former he condemned, on the principle that "where much is given, much will be required." If *they* were guilty because they rejected Christ when he came in the flesh, what shall be said of *us*, who refuse to receive his gospel; "which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost,



according to his own will?" If a comparison were instituted between us and them who are mentioned in the text, it would not be difficult to show, that *our guilt is greater*, as we enjoy superior advantages. After making due allowance for the unspeakable privilege of sitting under the personal ministry of Christ, and of witnessing his miracles, privileges which took away all excuse for impenitence, we must remember that that was a comparatively dark dispensation. The ministry of John, the forerunner of Christ, was short. The Saviour himself preached but a few years—his labors were divided among many places; his instructions were not then committed to writing; the great body of the Jewish people were prejudiced against him; a profession of discipleship subjected one to persecution and death: these are considerations which are to be weighed when their sins are compared with ours. We have none of their prejudices to encounter, we live in an age of greater light; though we have not the evidence of miracles, yet we have witnessed the fulfilment of prophecy; we have seen the triumph of the Gospel; various systems of philosophy have prevailed, and their inefficacy to reform the world has been proved; false religions have arisen and declined, while the religion of Christ, from actual experiment, is found to be adapted to every age and nation, to man in all circumstances; we live at a time when the superiority of the gospel, to Mahomedanism, to Deism, has been fully shown; we also enjoy the dispensation of the Spirit, and have witnessed numerous extensive revivals of religion. We have the full revelation of the divine will. They of Chorazin and Bethsaida had only the Old Testament Scriptures, obscured by the glossaries of the Rabbins; they knew nothing of the special influences of the spirit. And if they were without excuse, how much more aggravated our sin, how much more fearful our condemnation! We stand nearer heaven than they ever did; from our eminence we can take a wider survey of the works and purposes of God than they; our impenitence, therefore, will occasion a deeper fall and plunge us into a more intolerable perdition. "He that knew his master's will and did it not," especially when the Gospel was the text-book and the Holy Spirit the Teacher, "shall be beaten with many stripes." Who, from any part of the earth, will appear at the judgment, more guilty than we, if then found impenitent?

2. Another truth taught by this discussion, is, that *there will be different degrees of punishment in the next world.*

As Jesus pronounced the tremendous woes upon the cities that repented not at his preaching, he added, "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you." If the sin of those heathen cities was less, their punishment would be lighter. The chief objection brought by the enemies of truth against the doctrine of future punishment is founded upon the want of distinction in the subject of it. In the zeal of many to prove the *eternity*, they overlook the *degrees* of punishment which the finally impenitent will suffer. Our Saviour was careful to give this truth a prominent place in his instructions. It enters into all his representations of the natural character of man, the

nature of sin, the justice of God and the retributions of eternity. The distinctions made by men who take public opinion for their standard, in the grades of sin, are so unlike the decisions of the Bible that they shrink from the idea of eternal punishment. They take their idea of virtue from utility; while the imagination is filled with frightful images, of "lake of fire," "bottomless pit," "worm that never dies," they are ready to ask will the patriot, the moral man, the kind husband, the affectionate child, be consigned to these dismal abodes? It argues great weakness and blindness to be led away by appeals to our feelings. When the venerable John Jay, the conscientious judge and magistrate, was solicited, as Governor of the State, to grant pardon to a criminal under sentence of death, he replied, "that his compassion might lead him to do it, but his oath required him to be governed by his judgment rather than his feelings." God, in pronouncing sentence upon the impenitent at the last day, will be governed by principles of public justice. His judgment will differ from ours. We are selfish, and are influenced by partial views. The coming of Christ into our world modified the moral government of God. The administration of divine Providence previous to that event was shaped in reference to it. It ante-dated creation, became the starting point of computation for all coming time—the character of men was to be judged of according to their views of Christ and their treatment of his messages. Now it will be seen at once that in the opinions of a world which disregards the Saviour and sees no beauty in his person or value in his work, the sins of unbelief and impenitence, which in the sight of God are the sin of sins, will be considered as trivial; while moral virtues, growing out of temporary relationships and having no direct reference to the glory of God or the good of his kingdom, will be regarded by men as of primary importance. Here is the secret of much of the infidelity that prevails in regard to the great doctrine of future punishment. It is to be feared that nothing but the light of eternity will remove it. The man who trusts to his own righteousness will reject the Saviour, nor can he see how the rejection of his grace will expose him to the wrath of God.

In the context, the inference we have drawn of degrees of punishment in the next world, is more plainly implied. "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." Capernaum was the city in which Christ dwelt; they saw his perfect example, heard his daily instructions and witnessed some of his most impressive miracles, and yet they repented not. Nothing is said of gross immorality or out-breaking sins. In all probability most of the people were what the world call moral men. Still our Saviour said they should be thrust down to hell. Nor is this all. Sodom was the wickedest city that ever existed; the inhabitants were the most vile in outward conduct; they became a standard of wicked-

ness, so that in all future time, if the worst representations were to be made or the most infamous character was to be given, it would be said, "as wicked as Sodom;" that would be the climax of depravity, and Jesus Christ, who is to be the judge of the world, said, the men of Capernaum would meet a heavier doom in the judgment than they. And if we were now to explore the dark dismal regions of hell, we should find the hearers of Christ in the cities of Galilee, who repented not, lower in the depths of wretchedness and on the scale of suffering than the men of Sodom, and lower still should we find the impenitent who have gone from this place.

3. If many rejected Christ in the days of his personal ministry, though he spake as never man spake, and did so many wonderful works, we must consider it no strange thing if men *now* reject his ministry. The prophet Isaiah predicted his small success when he said, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" On some occasions his hearers rudely interrupted him; on others they evinced the most marked contempt and opposition. Although crowds were attracted to hear him by his miracles yet they could not endure his doctrines; when he told them that religion was something more than a form; that morality was an insufficient ground of hope; that they must be born again and live a life of faith, feeding, in a spiritual sense, upon his flesh; that they must become one with him, they said, "this is a hard saying, who can hear it?" And they turned away. After his arduous labors in the cities of Galilee, teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, he gathered but few disciples; the great mass remained unaffected; and when he had finished his ministry, all his disciples in Jerusalem and who had followed him from other places, were so few that they could be accommodated in an upper chamber. Paul says, that he was seen after the resurrection of "above five hundred brethren at once." It is true the promise and the gift of his Spirit encourage his ministers to expect greater success; and numerous conversions have taken place under the preaching of the gospel; but men are no better disposed to receive the truth, than they were in the days of Christ. We find the same inattention to divine things, the same disposition to trust in their own righteousness, the same spirit of procrastination.

4. The example of Christ in the text, teaches us, that we must expose the sins of men, if they will not repent. Having made his circuit of the cities of Galilee, pressing them with arguments, working miracles for their conviction and offering them salvation, while they repented not, he began to change his tone, he reproved and condemned them. He preached peace, and they believed not; he then pointed them to the gathering storm of divine indignation. It is often asked of what use is denunciatory preaching? why deal in terrors? It is said that the heart that is barred against mercy will only resist the harsh tones of wrath. In answer it may be remarked, the denunciations of Jonah brought the city of Nineveh to repentance. "Knowing the terror of the Lord," says an apostle, "we persuade men." Although the

preaching of the law will not change the heart, it will show men the necessity of it. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Benevolence, therefore, prompts to an exhibition of the wrath of God. When Jesus wept over Jerusalem, he pronounced her doom. Who can tell how many who have read the awful sentence traced with the Saviour's tears, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate, and the things that belong unto thy peace are for ever hidden from thine eyes," may have taken the alarm and fled to the refuge of the gospel? And it will be well if the words of Christ in the text, setting forth the aggravated sin and punishment of the cities of Galilee, arouse the guilty in this congregation to flee from the wrath to come. God may bear with you, the light of the Sabbath may still shine upon you, overtures of mercy may be presented, but if you put off repentance and sin against truth and love, you must lie down in deeper sorrow than the Jews who heard Christ.

*Finally.*—This discussion teaches us *the great danger of continuing to reject the Gospel*. When Christ went through these cities, his preaching and miracles must have awakened deep interest; but they who remained impenitent, becoming familiar with these solemn scenes, were less disposed to renounce their sins; their fears gradually subsided, till the mighty works of the Son of God only hardened them in unbelief. It is a law applicable as well to our moral as to our physical nature, that powerful stimulants oft-repeated lose their effect. The men of Galilee had heard and seen enough to move the cities of Tyre and Sidon, and yet they repented not. It is dangerous to trifle with serious things. If we do not yield to first impressions of the truth, a habit of indifference is contracted; and it is like attempting to wash out the leopard's spots, to break up such apathy. In the conversion of sinners the Holy Spirit moves in a line with nature. God works by means; and novelty is one of the most powerful. To the heathen everything is new in the religion of Christ. Its great truths strike the mind with force; its awful scenes kindle the imagination; its simple worship affects the heart; but to *us* who have long been accustomed to these things, they have comparatively little interest. To *us* no new truths will be revealed, nor any new form of the *old*. The regularity with which the Sabbath returns, the uniformity of the services of the sanctuary, serve to weaken the impression, and diminish the prospect of salvation. Let the impenitent think of this; what is to arouse you? You hear the same voice, the discussion of familiar topics; were we to go to the destitute heathen, they would hear. There are those here, who have heard enough to convert half the heathen world; every Sabbath's delay is like rolling another stone to the mouth of the sepulchre, which will increase the difficulty of rising to newness of life.

## THE FAMILY REVIVAL.

THE family, whose condition I am to describe, is a representative of thousands in our churches, who are living in the full enjoyment of the highest Christian privileges. The father is actively engaged in the business of life. The pursuits of the world engross his chief care, from day to day. Yet, he is a Christian. He maintains, in his general intercourse with his fellow-men, a character consistent with his religious profession. In his household arrangements, all the forms and appearances of Christian worship are daily observed. The morning calls the inmates of the dwelling to the family altar. The Scriptures are read, and perhaps a hymn is sung. The prayer is offered: but when the circle are dispersed, it is at once evident that the exercise has made no strong impression.

The duties at home, the business abroad, and the pleasures of life, engage the attention of the various members of the household. It is *not* the *great object* of this family to glorify God. The parents are real Christians; but their affections have wandered from God, and are too much set upon this world. Their children are not interested in the great salvation, and their parents are so much devoted to their mental improvement and social accomplishments, as to feel too little that the claims of God and his kingdom are paramount to everything else. They would shudder at the thought of saying that religion is not the great concern; and in their daily prayers they always offer the supplication, that they may have *first* an interest in the kingdom of God. But the children and the domestics see, from the yielding current of *their life*, that Christian duty is not unfrequently made to compromise with the customs of the world. Thus they go on, from time to time, their offspring growing up in impenitence. Their dwelling is not illuminated by the cheering light of the Saviour's face. The altar is there, but its fire is dim. The sacrifice is offered, but the lamb has a blemish. "Holiness to the Lord" is not legible on the walls of their tabernacle, and upon all its furniture. And the stranger "in their gates" would scarcely infer that their house is the Lord's, and all that appertains to it, consecrated to his service.

But He, who loves his people, will not suffer them to go on, satisfying themselves with the cup of emptiness. He sends an affliction, to recall their affections to him. Sickness falls upon a child. Their loved one suffers, and the whole circle sympathize with it. The parents think of their past course. They call to mind what God has done for them, and what they have been doing in *his* cause. They feel convinced that a cold and worldly spirit has damped the ardor of piety, and that their lives have been barren and unfruitful. They plead for the recovery of their child, and they confess the guilt of their own backsliding. Their hearts are softened. They weep and pray. They return to God, and God returns to them.

Now, the spirit which reigns in their dwelling is changed. The worldly visitor does not come. *Their minister*, and their most devoted *Christian friends*, renew their visits, and the house of affliction becomes the place where God is acknowledged, and sought, and honored.

How altered is the family prayer! No heartless formality now. It comes from stricken hearts. A father's and a mother's tenderest sympathies are touched, and an avenue is opened into their bosoms, through which the good Shepherd can communicate the richest of his spiritual blessings.

Morning and evening the word of truth is read, and regarded with far different feelings. It is seen and *felt* to be the bread of life to *their* souls, as well as to the sick sufferer's, whose days are apparently numbered. The parents think their child must die. They know, that if un-renewed, the soul must be lost! They cry to God. Faithfully now, if never before, they warn the child they love, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and in no other name can one hope for salvation. The truth reaches the heart, with an emphasis never felt before. And the reason is, it *comes from the heart*. A father's and a mother's bosom bleed at the withering prospect of giving back thus to its Maker, the immortal spirit which had been entrusted to their care, with this injunction: "Take this, and train it up *for me*." They have not done it. Parental affection is almost agonized at the recollection of past neglect, and the dreadful anticipation of the grave, over which they must ever weep with hopeless grief.

But God in tender mercy hears the cry of his chosen. God is a Father, and he pities a parent. He averts the dreadful stroke. He spares the child. And the hearts of Christian parents are melted and subdued by gratitude. If anything can reach them, this will.

But, what is the effect of such a visitation upon the household who receive it? Religion resumes the place in that habitation, from which she was removed. Enter the dwelling,—you cannot fail to see her there. She is conspicuous from morning to night. If business calls, it does not call away from her. Her light is in the path. Her shield protects, and her smiles cheer and bless. In that family now, she in reality presides. At the altar, her mantle falls on every sincere worshipper. The blessing invoked at the table, is not an unmeaning formality. The words that are uttered, are felt in the heart. At the fire-side her presence is acknowledged; and if the stranger enters their gates, he finds that Israel's God is there. In short, the *spirit of religion* in that family, is revived. The sick one slowly recovers; and were it not for the uncertainty of a sick-bed repentance, there would be hope that the sufferer had found, in the sickness of body, the life of the soul. Others in the household, brothers, sisters or domestics, have sympathized in the sorrow, have seen religion restored to her throne in the heart, have listened to the counsel which now has been given them, and have profited by the prayers offered up in their behalf.

They have repented, and embraced the Saviour; and it might be



literally said of the fruits of this affliction, as of the restoration of Dorcas, 'many believed in the Lord.'

Now this is, strictly speaking, a family revival of religion. And such is the kind of revival that we most need.

The arrangement of Providence which divides the many millions of the human race into the various family circles, which go to make up the great aggregate of human society, furnishes the clue to the most powerful causes which can be brought to bear upon the moral and social improvement of man.

Here, we apprehend, is the basis, on which the universal spread of the Gospel must be laid. It is to carry *home* to the fireside, to the social and endearing influences of domestic life, a more constant, uniform and affectionate interest in the salvation of every individual embraced in the family circle. *Let us begin at home.*

Suppose every Christian in the world should engage heartily in duty, with the impression that the little circle with which he is associated in daily intercourse, constitutes the appropriate part of the vineyard for his culture. As he cannot by any possible means, reach the thousands and the millions who are removed beyond the sphere of his personal influence, let him remember that God designs him more especially to labor for those whom he *can reach*. In this way, every portion of the soil will have its cultivators, and no part of the vineyard be neglected. But when it seems to the Christian that he can act for God, anywhere but *at home*, when his Christian neighbor feels so too, and all the church with which he is connected, sympathize in the almost universal reluctance, to act immediately for the friends among whom God has placed them, the *whole ground* is more or less neglected. Each looks away from his *own*, while it is utterly impossible that he can properly attend, and do justice, to another's.

It is probable, there is scarcely a Christian family in the land, that does not embrace some two, three, or half a dozen who are living in impenitence and sin. Were they the especial objects of the prayers, the efforts, and the Christian counsels of those with whom their lot is cast, how would it tell upon the increase of the churches, throughout our country! Parents, children and domestics would come under the tender and constant influence of Christian intercourse, made more intimate and impressive from those endearing sensibilities with which social life invests it."



## PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

"THIS must be *professed* as well as real subjection to the Gospel. It is 'with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness:' it is 'with the mouth that confession is made unto salvation.' Some persons act precisely as if the latter part of this declaration were an interpolation. But it is not. To be disciples of Jesus Christ, and to *declare* ourselves his disciples, the two constitute our duty. Neither part may be dispensed with. Words and actions are intended to confirm each other. It is true that actions speak louder than words, but the harmony of both is an utterance louder still. Let those who hesitate respecting the obligation of a public profession of religion, read what Christ, in the Gospel, says respecting those who 'confess' and 'deny' him 'before men.' Did he mean nothing by such language? Nothing? But, say some, 'if we obey Christ's commands, will not our actions declare unequivocally what we are? If our subjection to the Gospel be real, will it not of necessity be sufficiently manifest?' But how is a person to obey all the commands of Christ, without a distinct and open confession of him, when one class of these commands requires such confession? To obey in part only, is not having 'respect unto all his commandments.'

"A profession of Christianity is never complete, unless it be made both by *works* and by *words*. Without the former, it is the merest pretence—without the latter, it is materially defective, perhaps essentially so. I advise no man to try eternity without both a real and professed subjection to Jesus Christ. When you appear before him as your judge, you will not like to have it in remembrance that you had not been known on earth as his disciple, never numbered among his friends; that you never, by any voluntary and public act, connected yourself with his Church; never entered into communion with his disciples; that you never met with them to pray and to sing a hymn to Christ as God, as Pliny says the primitive Christians did; that you separated the sacraments, which God hath joined together, and were satisfied with a covenant sealed with only one seal, and that affixed by your parents in your unconscious infancy.

"It is true that some do not profess religion, because they have it not to profess. This is melancholy. But, to have religion and conceal it—to attempt to get to heaven by stealth, and defraud Christ of the public honors of our allegiance and salvation here, is mean—is perilous."—*Nevins*.

## DEATH.

"THE prospect of death discloses things to us, which, through life, we see not, or are inattentive to. The foolish virgins, not till the coming of the bridegroom, found out that they had no oil; or, if they knew it, they regarded it not.

"The most careless through life often express great concern when life is closing.

"That man, who has never quaked at thoughts of death, is not fit to die; and he, who has never trembled at the prospect of meeting God, is not prepared to meet him; and he, that has never stood in awful apprehension of the retribution that awaits the guilty, is full likely to realize its horrors.

"Of some men whom I have known, and who intended, by and by, to come to Christ, and who are now in eternity, this is the history. One died without being sick. Another was sick *here*, in the brain. A third in his sickness still put it off. A fourth spoke of a callousness that had come over his heart, by reason of which he could not feel. A fifth hastily ran into a refuge of lies. A sixth found he had quenched and put out the last spark of the Spirit. He had ceased to strive. He called and cried in vain—God let him alone. He found, too late, that He was a being not to be trifled with. That was fulfilled in his case—'I will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh.'

"How oft there is not only no twilight to the evening of life, but no evening; nor yet the noon reached, nor even the morning sun high in the heavens! And how oft there is no premonition, but death intrudes into the midst of life, and not gradually withereth the flower but rudely and suddenly severs its stem!

"What a change is wrought in death! It is a very awful thing, even to die in the Lord. Remember this, Christian! In the morning thou art here, panting, laboring, dying—and before it is night on earth, thou art in distant Paradise, breathing its air and partaking in its delights—from this sphere and these revolutions, removed in a twinkling, where there is no need of sun or moon, but the living light of the divine glory illumines all. Now thou art with thy earthly friends and acquaintance, and anon with Christ, and one in the General Assembly and Church of the First-born—this hour taking drinks and medicines from a nurse's hand, and a few hours afterwards it is given thee to drink of living waters, and to eat of the fruit of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. The poor malefactor, who came out of his prison to be crucified with Christ, as forlorn and hopeless a creature as lived, before the even lights were kindled in Jerusalem, was a sanctified and saved spirit, in the happy society of saints and angels. What a change for this poor fellow! And, to every one that trusts in Jesus, it shall be in like manner.

"There is a sense in which Jesus Christ, and the Spirits around his throne, have no sympathy with us in our lamentations over the pious dead. They *rejoice* at meeting one who has accomplished his warfare, and overcome through the blood of the Lamb."

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